



**MUSEUM  
OF  
SOCIAL AND POLITICAL  
HISTORY**

**A SUBMISSION TO THE  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF  
VICTORIA'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY  
CELEBRATIONS**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 As a result of the Premier's Conference held on June 19th and 20th, 1981, the Federal Government will contribute \$5 million to Victoria's 150th Anniversary Celebrations for a specific project yet to be determined.

The Victorian Government has also agreed to contribute \$10 million for new projects.

1.2 The establishment of a Museum of Social and Political History would be a most worthy achievement because the objectives of such a museum would be identical to those stated by Victoria's 150th Anniversary Committee:

*"To create an awareness amongst all Victorians of their history in its broadest sense and their heritage;*

*To celebrate the richness of diversity in people, their traditions, their culture, their recreation and the precious freedoms which they enjoy;*

*To make people aware of the growth and potential of Victoria and to provide the motivation which will inspire our people with a common purpose to serve the community and plan a better future;*

*To create an awareness amongst Victorians of the opportunities available to them to enjoy one of the highest living standards in the world and at the same time to make significant contributions to those who are less fortunate,*

*To provide worthwhile and significant reminders of 150 years of achievement and growth."*

1.3 The 150th Anniversary Committee has already agreed to support the writing and publication of a three part History of Victoria, and a Museum of Social and Political History would be a publicly visible complement to this literature.

1.4 The 150th Anniversary Celebrations, provide an opportunity to raise the public consciousness of Victoria's history in order to stimulate its imagination of the possibilities for the future.

1.5 The opening of the facility in 1984 would not only be a memorable event in itself, but would be an enduring memorial to the sequicentenary celebrations.

1.6 There is a need to create a 'sense of place' by fostering a greater awareness of our past, a sense of local pride in our achievements, and personal identification with the State.

1.7 This challenge would be met by establishing a social and political history museum in central Melbourne that would present the recorded history of Victoria, the development of this State's social and political history, and the relationship of this to other activities, in a compressed form, which the ordinary person could easily comprehend.

1.8 In both an entertaining and educational fashion, a series of exhibitions would tell the story of Victoria; beginning with the origins of the earth itself and ending with an account of the multi-cultural Victorian society of today. The integrated story of social history would present an encapsulated view of the region, its natural environment and wildlife resources, social and political structure and industrial development.

The proposed account would include:

- Origins of the land itself
- Aboriginal Australia
- European Colonization
- Contemporary Victorian Society
- Directions for the future

1.9 By marketing Victoria to both residents and visitors alike, the Museum of Social and Political History would: increase awareness and understanding of Victoria amongst its citizens and serve as a major tourist attraction for Victoria. The Museum would provide a focal point for tourism in Victoria. Tourists would be presented with an immediate view of this State and its people. A central social history Museum could further stimulate a visitor's interest in the numerous regional historical attractions already available in Victoria, thus contributing to the Tourism industry and the overall economy.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the Museum of Social and Political History would be:

2.1 To present the social and political history of Victoria in the broadest context incorporating economic and environmental considerations including the history of the Victorian landscape, geological resources and wildlife as the milieu in which the social and political history of Man has taken place.

2.2 To depict facets of daily lives of indigenous Aboriginal inhabitants of this region and the lives of the ordinary European and Asiatic men and women who settled here and established and developed the modern State of Victoria.

2.3 To use existing knowledge and artefacts to provide a public education resource to communicate information on themes from Victoria's history.

2.4 To actively promote informed public interest in Victoria's social and political history co-operating with and assisting relevant societies, other museums and the mass media.

2.5 To involve visitors in a sight and sound experience in which they are moved through a simulation of the natural and human history of Victoria.

### **3 . METHOD**

The Museum of Social and Political History could be established under the Museum Development Committee which has been created to advise the Minister on overall museum policy in Victoria, to ensure co-ordination of existing resources. Alternatively the Museum could be established as a jointly controlled Department of the National Museum and the Science Museum. Either approach could take advantage of the State's existing collections of natural and technical history, the maximum use of available museum expertise and the most economical use of existing museum service facilities.

In developing the project it would be necessary:

3.1 To involve recognised historians, anthropologists and environmentalists in the development of the themes and the selection of artefacts.

3.2 To present temporary and permanent displays which will set standards of quality interpretation and lucidity for the community and will combine the audio and visual presentation of modern technology with the art of the designer in order to create a sense of immersion in natural and human history.

3.3 To relate the presentation to regional history parks, historic buildings and other historic sites in the State, such as Pioneer Settlement Swan Hill, Sovereign Hill Ballarat, Flagstaff Hill Warrnambool, Coal Creek at Wonthaggi, National Trust Buildings Exhibition Buildings, 'Como' and 'Ripponlea' and Werribee Park, La Trobe's Cottage, The Performing Arts Museum, Fire Brigade Museum, the Polly Woodside and The Old Melbourne Gaol.



3.4 To ensure the museum is used as an educational resource, providing support for school curriculum particularly in history, social studies, legal studies, environmental studies and anthropology.

3.5 To make use of the considerable artefacts and resources of The National Museum, Science Museum and State Library.

3.6 To provide a publication and museum shop to allow for purchase of supplemental material.

3.7 To provide a refreshment area in a historical setting, so people can congregate in a comfortable atmosphere and discuss what they have just seen.

3.8 To actively promote the museum by such means as:

- providing a 'Speaker's Corner' whereby outside organisations arrange displays of one month's duration and solicit public opinion and involvement in topical issues,
- condensing portions of the audiovisual exhibit into 30 and 60 second community service announcements,
- mounting brief audio-visual presentations at major airports, railway stations and bus depots to immediately catch the interest of the interstate and international visitor,
- showing other extracts of the display on international flights to Melbourne,
- composing a theme song for the museum, which could be promoted for independent broadcast and become well-known as a popular tune in the community,
- conducting self-navigated walking tours
- of places of historical interest within the City.

#### 4. LOCATION

4.1 An ideal venue for such a project would be *The Old Treasury Building* which has a number of advantages:-

- It is centrally located in Spring Street in regard to public transport and international hotels such as The Hilton, The Wentworth, The Southern Cross and Windsor.
- It is in close proximity to other major historical sites such as Parliament House, Captain Cook's Cottage, and the Exhibition Buildings.
- It is a building of historical significance which should be preserved and fully utilized by the public.
- It is of sufficient size in that the floor dimensions are 1,951 square metres.

4.2 If it were not possible to re-site the existing functions of The Old Treasury Building, it may be possible to house such a feature in other buildings or below ground in the forecourt to the present Library/Museums complex.

4.3 Alternatively, it may be possible to house the first stages of the proposed new exhibitions in the existing Swanston Street premises and/or use them as travelling displays to country centres as an interim measure.

## 5. FINANCE

5.1 The cost of the project will require detailed study.

In order to develop the concept further, exhibition design consultants will need to be engaged and a prime function they will be given is the preparation of detailed cost estimates.

5.2 The South Australian figures for a building of comparable size, completed in 1980, were

### Establishment Costs

Renovations - \$3.2 million

Audio-Visual - \$400,000

### Operating Costs

For 1980/81 - \$350,000

5.3 It should be noted that:

- Although it is difficult to ascertain without structural investigation, it is not envisaged that renovations to the Old Treasury Building would be as expensive as those required in Adelaide.
- There will be some costs involved in relocating the offices of the Governor and the Ministry of Police and Emergency Services.

5.4 The staff required could consist of:

- Registrar
- Promotions Officer
- 2 Research Officers
- 4 Education Officers
- 3 Sales Staff
- 3 Cleaners
- 3 Security Staff
- 8 Attendant Staff

As well, use would be made of honorary workers.

## 6. CONSULTATION

It will be necessary to develop detailed project plan in consultation with a wide range of individuals and organisations...

6.1 The assistance of most Government departments will be required in the development of displays on activities under their jurisdiction.

6.2 There are numerous other organisations such as the National Trust and History Park Trusts which should be involved and an inventory of all relevant bodies should be compiled in the early development stages.

6.3 Private enterprise could be involved in the sponsorship of specific exhibits and the operation of a refreshment area.

6.4 There will need to be early liaison with the Governor, the Minister of Police and Emergency Services and the Public Works Department to ascertain the feasibility of their relocation from the Old Treasury Building.

6.5 Every citizen of Victoria could have the opportunity to be involved in certain aspects of the development of this new museum venture; such as suggesting a name, which, in itself would generate a feeling of excitement and anticipation.